engineering approval committee (GEAC) set up under rule 4 of the rules for manufacture, use, import, export and storage of hazardous micro organisms/genetically engineered organisms or cells, 1989 notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 is following a policy of case by case approval of transgenic crops taking into consideration the impact on biodiversity, human health etc;

(c) and (d) Bt. cotton developed by mahco is the first and only transgenic crop approved by the GEAC for commercial cultivation in India.

Import of genetically modified food

3201. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to allow imports of Genetically Modified (GM) food on a case-by-case basis;

(b) if so, whether top nutrition experts have expressed fears that there are no systems as of now to adequately assess the risk or ever to detect unapproved genetic modifications as reported in the media;

(c) whether Government have adopted any cautions approach in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) The Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import and Export and Storage Of Hazardous Micro Organisms Genetically Engineered Organisms Or Cells, 1989, framed under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 provide that all food stuffs, ingredients in food stuffs and additives including processing aids containing or consisting of genetically engineered organisms or cells, shall not be produced, sold, imported or used except with the approval of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee.

(b) The presence or absence of different transgenic DNA/proteins in the food samples can be ascertained at the laboratories existing at Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore; National Bureau of Plant Genetic Research (NBPGR), New Delhi; Centre for DNA

Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad; Industrial Toxicological Research Institute (ITRC), Lucknow and National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad.

(c) and (d) Before approving import of GM food stuffs, safety information generated on these food stuff is examined by the GEAC through a group of experts. All genetically modified food is tested for toxicity and allergenicity prior to its approval for human consumption. As of date the GEAC has not approved import of any food stuff containing genetically modified substance.

National Environmental Awards

3202. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Environmental Awards entitled Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar for the years 1998 and 1999 were conferred in June 2003 only, and the names of awardees for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002, are still to be decided; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons for this inordinate delay in finalizing the names and what steps are being taken to see that Awards for the preceding years are conferred immediately in the following years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV):

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) As a normal practice, the conferment of the awards takes place on a day connected with the environment. The process for finalization of awardees as well as conferment of Awards has since been streamlined.

Environmental pollution

3203. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that environmental pollution is one of the greatest health and life hazards of today;

(b) if so, whether Government are also aware that problem assumes different forms of air pollution, water pollution, food pollution and noise pollution; and